DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520 WC KENNO 4/29/82

October 20, 1977

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The thirty-one nations Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees held its annual session in Geneva from October 4-13, 1977. Among several conclusions reached by the governments participating in this meeting was a recommendation drafted and sponsored by the United States delegation which urged the High Commissioner to renew and continue to strengthen his assistance efforts on behalf of refugees from Indochina. The U.S. proposal was approved without modification.

Knowing of your great interest in and support for programs of assistance to refugees, the text of this recommendation is quoted herewith for your information:

"The members of the Executive Committee - concerned by the plight of refugees from Indochina -

(a) Expressed appreciation of the efforts of the High Commissioner in carrying out special humanitarian tasks for the benefit of refugees from Indochina.

(b) Recognized the need for continued humanitarian assistance particularly in the area of resettlement and urged the international community to cooperate fully with the High Commissioner by extending such assistance.

(c) Recalled that the High Commissioner had issued numerous appeals to governments over the past three years for humanitarian assistance in various forms.

The Honorable
Joshua Eilberg,
Chairman, Subcommittee on Immigration,
Citizenship, and International Law,
House of Representatives.

(d) Noted with deep satisfaction the initiatives taken by the High Commissioner with the Secretary-General of the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO) which resulted in a joint appeal issued on 3 October 1977 to ship-owners to rescue "boat people" from Indochina in distress on the high seas.

(e) Urged the High Commissioner to renew and continue to strengthen his efforts to secure humanitarian assistance and cooperation for Indochinese refugees in the following areas:

(1) Obtaining the full application of exisitng international agreements relating to the rescue of persons on the high seas in the areas where Indochinese refugees are likely to be located.

(2) Seeking the elimination of situations where permission to land at the first or even the second port of call is refused, either to "boat people" or to refugees on merchant ships who have been rescued at sea.

(3) Securing greater understanding and cooperation in the granting of asylum in areas where it is first sought, including likely first ports of call for "boat people".

(4) Continuing to seek maximum resettlement opportunities for both Indochinese refugees in the camps in Thailand and for the "boat people".

(5) Continuing to bring to the attention of Governments and agencies the urgent need for financial and other assistance necessary to provide a humanitarian solution to the plight of Indochinese refugees in camps in Thailand, the meet settlement and resettlement expenses and to meet the costs of temporary care and maintenance in areas of first asylum."

You will note that this recommendation gives the High Commissioner a clear mandate to concentrate on four specific areas of action. We are concerned that ship-owners live up to existing international agreements to rescue "boat people" in distress on the high seas. We are equally anxious that governments grant permission to land and asylum to refugees

who reach their shores. There is also an urgent need for more countries to provide a greater number of permanent resettlement opportunities for these refugees. Similarly, the financial burden of UNHCR assistance activities must be shared on a broader basis.

It is our firm intention to follow-up with the High Commissioner to determine what actions he will take in response to this initiative. At the same time, we have made key U.S. missions abroad aware of the action of the Executive Committee in the interest of keeping before governments the need to continue to be forthcoming in their efforts on behalf of refugees from Indochina.

We will of course be pleased to keep you and your staff current on developments in this effort.

Sincerely,

Patricia M. Derian
Assistant Secretary for
Human Rights and
Humanitarian Affairs

Clearances: D/HA/ORM - Mr. Carlin

H - Mr. Krizek

D/HA/ORM:GLWarren,Jr.:nd:10/20/77